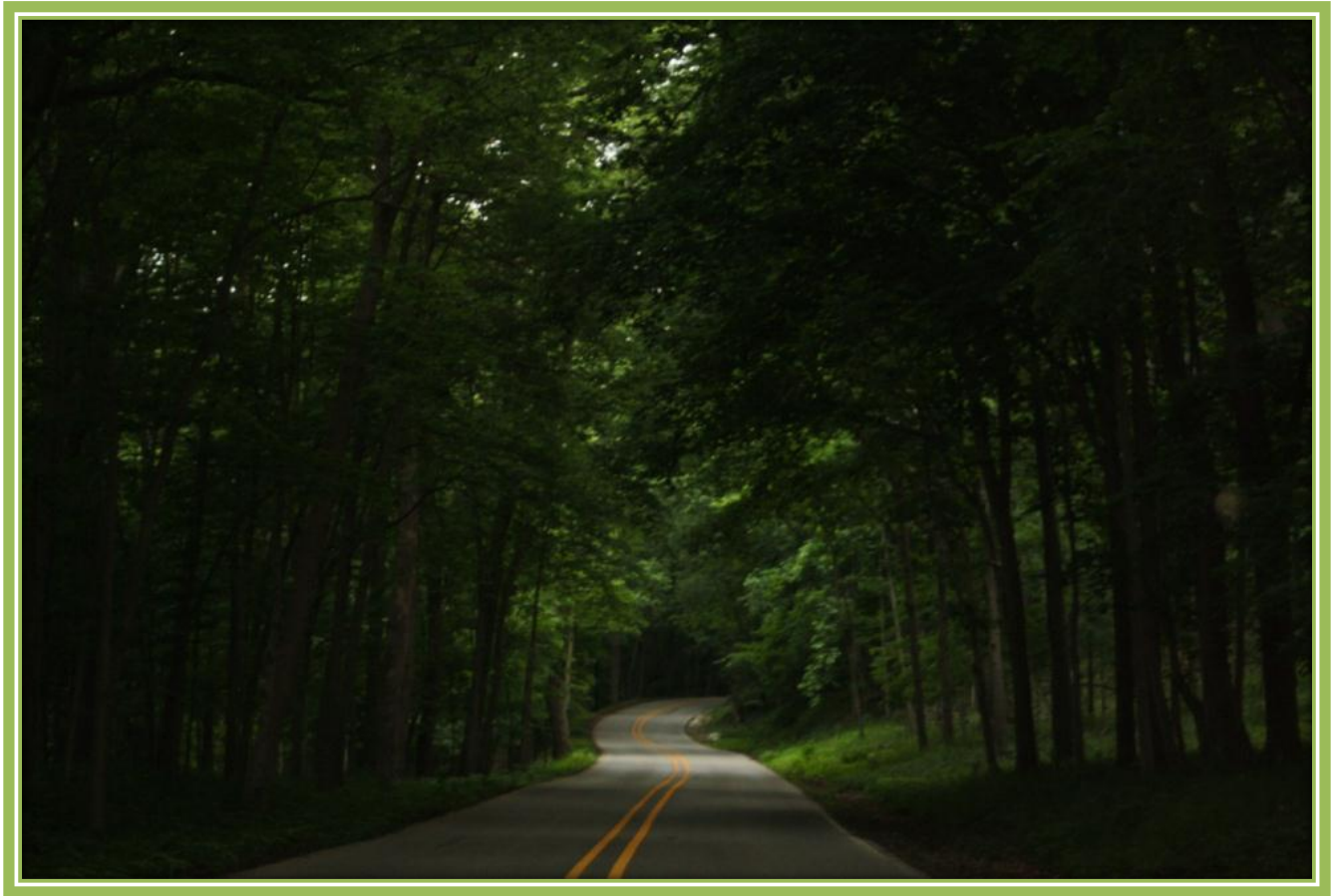


Nestled away in the Des Moines River Valley is Dolliver State Park, a park I had never been to and wish I had explored sooner. I know I will be going back after all the great discoveries I made here. As I drove through the winding road I took this picture to show how dense and shady it is here. Even on the hottest summer day, it felt cool and breezy inside the park.

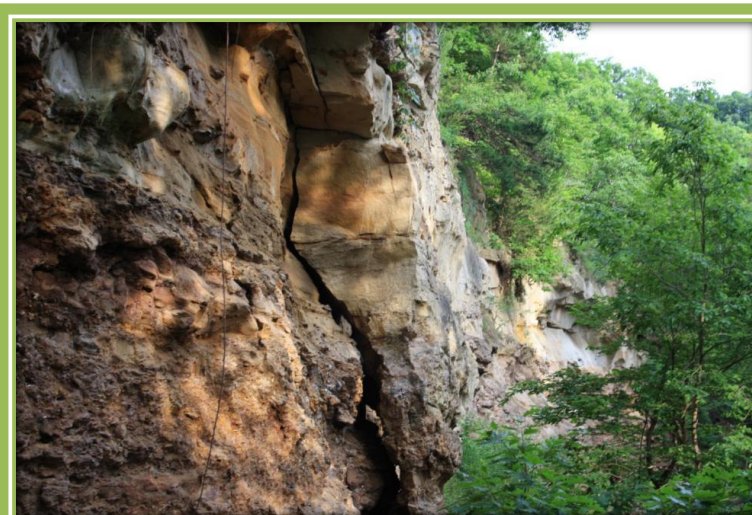
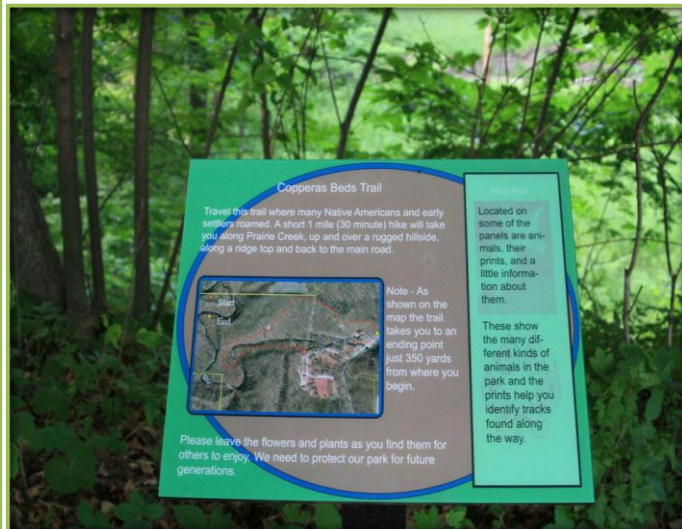






Growing up near Ledges State Park I spent a lot of time wading through the streambeds there. Dolliver provides a similar setting but with more opportunities to view the limestone bluffs from the hiking trails. Here you can see the sandy stream winding under the bluffs and picnic tables along the edges to enjoy the view.

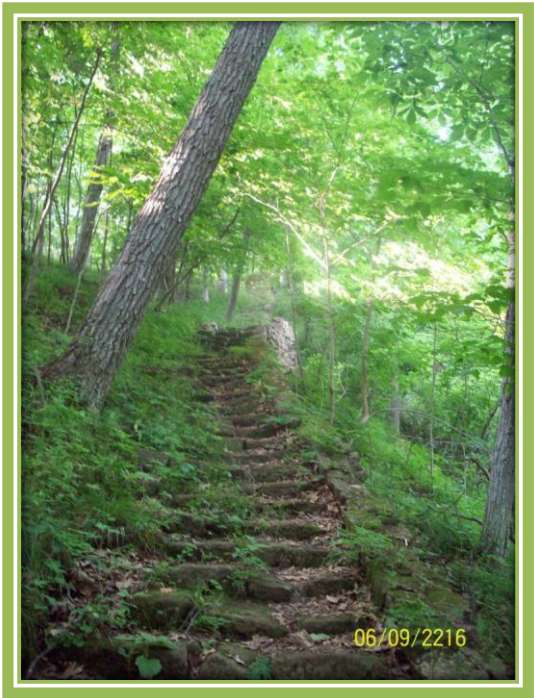




There were several trails running throughout the park. The first hike I took here was on an interpretive trail leading to the Copperas beds. In the picture below you can see the red coloration from the minerals in the streambed clay. It almost looks spray painted! The trail led us to an observation deck, where I took the bottom photo. This bluff was covered in orange and red colored mineral streaks.



After visiting the Copperas beds the trail led us over the stream and up this neat staircase to the top of the bluffs. Along the trail I saw a variety of wildlife, including these ferns and snails.







I'm a big prairie lover so I was excited to learn about this unique type of prairie from an interpretive sign along the trail. These "goat prairies" are original remnants and were named because of their steep location on slopes.







Next I visited the campgrounds, which were neat because they overlooked the Des Moines River and had a nearby boat ramp. At the edge of the RV sites were two rental cabins, constructed of stone in the 1930's. I will definitely be going back to experience a couple nights in one of these cozy, rustic and secluded feeling cabins.



Aside from the family cabins, Dolliver also had a group camp available for rent, a unique feature that is different from any other park in Iowa. This group of ten cabins and central dining halls is open for family reunions, youth or scout groups, etc.





Located directly across the driveway from the group camp is a beautiful lodge also available for rent. I had fun climbing on the large rock in between the lodge and the nearby playground.



I also learned about some history of the area through stories such as that of Boneyard Hollow. The story goes that Native Americans drove herds of buffalo off the bluffs into the canyon below.



Several large groups were using the park the day I was there, such as this gathering of friends enjoying a game of volleyball. I think there's something for everyone to enjoy at this park!